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Pulpit Preaching

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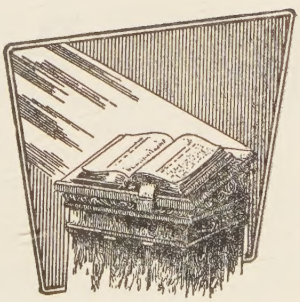

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Adam to Daniel, edited by Gaalyahu Cornfeld, is a double-sized and handsomely manufactured volume which records through quotation, commentary, and hundreds of color and black-and-white plates the story of the Old Testament and the biblical world as brought into view through the labors of archaeologists and biblical scholars. This fascinating volume, which ought to be added to church libraries, has been made in Israel by Israeli and Western specialists. (The Macmillan Company, 559 pp., $13.95)

The Bible Story with Living Pictures by Ralph Kirby is an unusually appealing book in which a retelling of biblical stories is accompanied by 250 photographs from a variety of sources including Cathedral Films and major studio productions. The four narrative emphases are the Old Testament, the New Testament, the early years of the Christian Church, and the daily life of the people in the Holy Land. The book will particularly help young people. (Harper & Brothers, 320 pp., $5.95)

Baker's Bible Atlas, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and others, will become an important companion for Bible reading and study. The geographical emphases of the book, exceptionally readable full-page maps in color, and numerous photographs, together commentary, exposition, and interpretation, make this a storehouse for enlightenment and guidance. (Baker Book House, 333 pp., $6.95)

Great Personalities for the New Testament is a companion volume to

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WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey

Today the experience, knowledge, and responsibility of every thinking man is very much greater than that of most men of New Testament days. But what has changed and inspired those men, what gave them daring, hope, patience, and self-giving love is quite timeless. There is no real reason to suppose that we cannot tap the resources of God just as effectively as they did — no real reason except our modern insulations!

J. B. Phillips

* * *

Christianity is the collision between God and man, and the point of impact of this collision is the church in mission.

* * *

The quickest and best way to reach America for Christ is through the doorway of the home.

Hazen G. Werner

* * *

If the present population of the world could be represented by a thousand persons living in a single town, 60 persons would represent the population of the U.S.A. and 940 all the other nations. The 60 Americans would have half the income of the

(Continued on page 32)

Next month's topics will be "Now Thank We All Our God" and "This Is the Way God Comes," sermons for Thanksgiving Sunday and the Season of Advent.

Pulpit Preaching

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J. R. BROKHOFF
FRED E. LUCHS
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PROTESTANTISM: A RELIGION OF RESPONSE

J. R. Brokhoff, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte, N. C.

For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of law.
Romans 3:28

A middle-aged woman was standing by an elevator in a large department store. Her lips were moving as though she was holding a conversation with herself. People began to look curiously at her as one out of her head. She felt obliged to explain: "My husband is late. I know what he is going to say. I am just practicing my response."

That is what the Protestant religion is: a practicing of a response to the Word of God. In Protestantism God takes the initiative and we respond. God acts and we react. God speaks and we echo. God calls and we answer. This is what Paul is saying in the text about the Christian religion. Only God can make a Christian. "We hold that man is justified . . . " A man is justified. He does not justify himself by anything he does, says, or gives. "Apart from the works of law" means that man has absolutely no part in getting right with God. No act of obedience to God's will and no service rendered will ever make a man fit to stand before God.

This was the basic issue of the Reformation. Luther did not concern himself primarily with the moral abuses in the church. We must not think of Luther as a charwoman scrubbing the dirty floors of the Vatican. Luther was primarily concerned with the teachings of the church as opposed to the teachings of the Bible. Luther was primarily a theologian, a philosopher, and a teacher of God's truth. If Luther were living today I doubt whether he would be concerned above all with the practical issues we face with Roman Catholicism: birth control, federal aid to parochial schools, an ambassador to the Vatican, etc. He would point to an issue far more basic and fundamental. This goes to the very core and heart of Protestantism and Catholicism. A Catholic is taught that with divine aid he must earn his salvation by doing good works. Through them he placates the wrath of God and satisfies divine justice. He is ever working to merit salvation. The Protestant works just as hard, but he is busy about his faith because he is already saved. He does not save himself, but God alone saves him. Only God can make a Protestant. His part in his religion is one of response to what God has said and done in his behalf.

I

Just what is that response? First, our consciousness of sin is a response to the vision of God. If we look at or in ourselves, we may not see anything wrong. We can find excuses for what we are and do. It is easy to rationalize our actions. Looking at ourselves we do not sentence ourselves as guilty.

If we look at other people, we do not have any sense of sin. We see only those who are a little worse than we are. This is always possible. Then we feel we are not so bad after all. We are actually better than many people. This leads us to the conclusion that we are good. We adopt a rosy, romantic view that man is inherently good and all we need do is bring the good out of men. There is no realization of sin in this view.

What man really is can be learned

only when we get a vision of the holiness of God. When Isaiah saw God on a throne high and lifted up, he responded, "Woe is me! I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips." At the sight of the majesty of God, he gained a sense of sins. When Jesus confronted Peter, Peter saw for the first time the purity and perfection of Jesus. What was his reaction? He fell on his knees at the feet of Jesus and implored, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

This vision of the absolute sinlessness of God gives man a consciousness of his sin. Now a man says with Luther that he is "a lost and condemned creature," and he is "without merit or worthiness." In the face of the perfection of Jesus, a man sees his total depravity. There is no good in him. He is a sinner and he cries, "O miserable man that I am!" This consciousness of sin is the starting point of the Protestant religion. If there is no realization of sin, there is no need of a Saviour. If there is no need of a Saviour, there is no point to the Christian religion.

II

Second, our salvation is a response to God's grace in and through Jesus Christ. "By grace are ye saved through faith and not of yourselves. It is a gift of God." We are saved by the mercy of God. Simply because he loves us, God has accepted us as sinners for Christ's sake, and adopted us into his family. This is the result of pure grace. We have nothing to do with getting God's approval or acceptance. It is like the sun. We live by its light and we enjoy its warmth. But what can we do about the sun? Did we make it shine? Can we make it warmer or last longer? All we can do is receive it gratefully and live by it. It brings life and light and health to us. In the same way, God's Son brings to us the light and life of salvation. The rays of grace come from God and shine down upon the children of men. They can do absolutely nothing except to receive it with open hearts.

You would think that all men would accept this as the most wonderful thing that ever happened. But it is not the case. Many will not accept it because it is too easy and too good to be true. They feel that they must share in the saving process of man. It is like the general, Naaman, who came to Elijah to get cured of leprosy. Elijah did not bother to give the important man an interview. He sent him a message that he should dip himself seven times in the Jordan. Naaman was insulted. He flew into a rage saying that it was ridiculous to bathe seven times in a little river like the Jordan when they had larger and more famous rivers in his own country. Many people today will not get cured of the leprosy of sin by bathing in the precious blood of Christ. It is too easy and simple an answer.

Years ago there was a young doctor, Ignaz Semmelweiss, who worked in a charity clinic of a Budapest hospital. He became alarmed over the fact that four out of 10 mothers died in giving birth to children. He began to study the situation, and found that the mothers died from an infection secured from the hands of the attending physician. Before going to the hospital staff with his discovery, he tried out his method of washing his hands before delivering a baby. While other sections of the hospital had the rate of losing four out of ten, not one of his fifty died. Then he went to the staff with his findings and urged the doctors to wash their hands before delivering a baby. The head doctors became purple with rage. They accused him of trying to humiliate the medical profession. He was dismissed. Semmelweiss took his cause to the people. He had leaflets printed urging them to get their doctors to wash their hands. He stood outside the factories and told the men, "Have your doctor wash his hands before delivering your baby." They tore up

his leaflets and laughed him to scorn. He died a disillusioned man. No one would heed his discovery because it was too simple. In a religious sense, people today will not accept salvation by grace alone because it is too easy and simple.

From this gift of salvation there comes another gift which we receive in response to God's goodness. It is happiness. The world thinks that happiness can be found. Many try to acquire it by indulging in entertainment or possessions. Happiness cannot be found or bought. It is a gift of God resulting from salvation. The Bible speaks about "the joy of salvation." It is a happiness that results from being with God. It is a source of deep joy to know that all is well between you and God. Eternity is secure. You are in God's good hands. You are his child and all things in the end will be for your good. As a result you do not have a care in the world. You are free from anxiety. This is real happiness, but it is always a response to God's salvation.

Another response is peace. The world thinks of attaining peace through armaments or a balance of power among the nations. Personally we think of acquiring peace by positive thinking. This type of peace is little more than rubbish. Peace is a gift of God through salvation. Paul put it this way: "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a peace that results from being in right relations with God. There is no fear or worry, because you know that God's will is good. God will take care of you. God will provide for you. God will see you through the worst, even death. The guilt of sin has been removed, and you are at peace. This is the peace the Bible describes as passing all understanding.

III

Third, our faith is a response to God the Holy Spirit. We hear that a man is justified by faith. Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Faith is the hand that accepts this salvation wrought in Christ. But where does a man get faith?

We cannot get faith by our own efforts. Luther wrote in the "Small Catechism," "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to him." We cannot get faith because we will to believe. Crisis or calamity will not force us to have faith.

Faith is a gift of God. We believe because God created faith in us through the Holy Spirit. Without God's help, how could we believe? How could we by our own efforts believe in a good God in a sinful world like this? Who could we ever believe that in this man, Jesus of Nazareth, there was the fulness of the Godhead? Look at the cross! Who could ever believe that by means of this cross the sins of all men for all time were removed? It is utterly ridiculous. It is fantastic. It is beyond the highest imagination. That is why Paul said that this faith was a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks. It is just impossible to believe these things without the help of God.

Faith then is not our creation. It is ours by response to God's Spirit. Paul wrote, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Faith results from hearing God's Word. In the Word is the Spirit of God. The Spirit arouses and creates faith in those whose hearts are receptive. If you lack faith or need your faith strengthened, then spend more time with your Bible in private devotions. Take every opportunity to hear the Word taught and preached. Receive the Word in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is the way to get faith. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit who comes in and through the Word.

IV

Fourth, our service is a response to

God's love. We know that good works are incumbent upon all who claim to be Christians. We feel we should render loving service to our fellowmen. That is very true. But how do we get to the point of giving this service? It is prompted by the love of God. The New Testament says, "We love him, because he first loved us." God sheds his love abroad in our hearts. His love arouses our love. It is a rebound, a response.

If we love God, we express it in loving our brothers. When the resurrected Christ asked Peter three times whether he loved him, Peter assured him he did. Then Jesus answered, "Feed my sheep . . . tend my lambs . . . feed my sheep." This love was to be proved by practical deeds of kindness. Jesus taught, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

When Wilberforce, the great Prime Minister of England, was a young man, he was gay, worldly, and frivolous. One day he came under the influence of the Methodist preacher, George Whitfield. For a time his friends feared he would become a Methodist. His mother said, "If he becomes a Methodist, I will cut him off." Wilberforce did become a Methodist. In doing so, he accepted Christ as his Master. He gave his whole life in consecration to Christ. When he became Prime Minister, Wilberforce did not begin his reforms with John Barleycorn or the red light districts of the cities. He attacked the worst evil of the day — slavery. He worked and struggled until at his death 800,000 slaves in the British Empire were freed. For all time the terrible scourge of slavery was removed from the British Empire.

Why did Wilberforce do it? He was motivated by the love of Christ. His social reforms were the result of the love he had in his heart for his Master. This is the source of all our good works and social action. Out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us and what he means to us we cannot do enough for him by serving our fellowmen.

V

All that we are, then, is the result of God's work in us and in our behalf. Does this make Protestantism a do-nothing religion? Does man have no part at all in his religion? Is he like a ball on a billiard table that does not move unless he is moved by another ball or a cue stick? No, man is not a ball of inert matter. He has something to do in his religion, but it is an activity of response to God's Word and work.

He can be hnmble. If God has done all, there is nothing for man to do regarding his salvation. As Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." All I am and all I have and all I hope to be is due to the grace of God. If God has made me what I am, wherein do I have to boast? Why should I be proud? God has made me what I am. Any good that has been accomplished God has done through me.

Moreover, a Protestant is receptive. He can be submissive to God's will. He can say to God: "Have thine own way, Lord. Have thine own way. Thou art the potter. I am the clay." He can say, "Take me and use me wherever and whenever you need me." Is that a little or easy thing? For Jesus to say it caused him a bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Let God save you. This is uppermost in God's heart. He planned our salvation from the foundation of the world. For this he sent Jesus to die on the cross. Here we go down the detour of sin. We go speeding down the broad highway of sin to hell. God yearns for us. He wants us to repent and turn back. Why do we persist in our sin? Why not let God save us?

God wants to love us, for he is love. That is his nature and essence. He created man that he might have someone to love. Yet we do not let God

love us. We love ourselves, and we want other people to love us. But God? No. We reject his love. We resent it and defy him. Yet God would take us like a little child and embrace us in his bosom. He would pick us up like a little lamb and carry us to the fold. This lack of love is really our chief sin. If we would allow God to love us, we would be different people. We would be loving like God. We would have warmth and peace in our hearts.

The Protestant's part, further, is to worship God. If God has done all of this and made us children of God, how can we help but magnify His name? We shout to him, "How great thou art!" We say: "Behold your God! See what God hath wrought!" He has created and redeemed us. We are totally in debt to his grace. The least we can do is praise and glorify him through worship.

Worship is not merely sitting in a pew and saying a few words of praise. In eleven chapters of Romans Paul tells us what God has done for our salvation. He begins the twelfth chapter, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your spiritual worship." Worship is service. Is it a service to God? That is blasphemy. We talk about worship services and our chief service is called "The Service." What does it mean? When we enter the service of our country or an employer, we give him our time, talents, and strength. We worship God in the services of our time, talents, and abilities in His service. Worship is a very practical matter. It is an offering of self and substance for the extension of God's kingdom on earth.

Protestantism is a religion of response. "We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of law." But suppose there is no response on the part of man?" There is the weakness of Protestantism! There is the Achilles heel of our religion. If there is no response, it is tragic. In one of his letters Paul assures us this was not the case with him, "I did not receive the grace of God in vain." He responded to it with a fully dedicated life of service.

Take this matter of repentance as a response. "God calling yet and shall I not hear?" God calling you by name across the centuries and infinite space, and you do not answer. Is it that you have ears and hear not? What a tragedy! A true Protestant will respond, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

What about the atonement? Christ is on the cross. Do you see him? He is there — bleeding, suffering, and dying. Just for you. Must we say what Jeremiah wrote, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" With Christ eternally on the cross for the sins of mankind, do you pass by carelessly, unconcernedly? A genuine Protestant looking at the cross says, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

Then there is service. God asks, "Whom shall I send and who will go for me?" Is there absolute silence? Are there no volunteers to come forward? If not, what a tragedy! A true Protestant will reply with Isaiah, "Here am I, Lord. Send me."

WHAT WE PROTESTANTS BELIEVE

Fred E. Luchs, First Congregational Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan

During World War I, I was playing in the home of a Roman Catholic neighbor. A quarrel started. Eventually the little boy struck his sister. She was too small to fight back except with words. She heaped upon him the cruelest name of that period, "You old pro-German." In those war

days that was the ugliest name you could call anyone. But the boy was not to be outdone. He turned upon his sister and retorted: "Go on, you old Protestant." That is one interpretation of Protestantism. An epithet heaped upon people we don't like.

Consider another definition of Protestantism. A novel of some years ago pictured a derelict applying for shelter in a mission. The following conversation ensued:

"What is your name?" the registrar asked.

"Arnold Steckel."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-five."

"Religion?"

"I don't have any."

The registrar looked up and his lips tightened. "You have to have one to stay here."

"Well, make it Protestant then."

A second definition of Protestantism is that it applies to non-Catholics.

What is a Protestant? The name Protestant comes from an incident occurring in 1529 when a formal protest was submitted at the Diet of Speyer. This Catholic assembly had aimed to undo much of the work of the Reformers. Some of the German princes had opposed those Roman Catholic leaders who fought the Reformation. Those who protested were called Protestants.

Protestantism meant then what it means now. The people stood up and affirmed that "I believe." As Protestants we need to know what we believe.

I

First, we believe in the Bible as the Supreme Rule of Truth (final authority). When a Catholic wishes to prove a point, he goes to the teachings of the Church. The Protestant goes to the teachings of the Bible. Protestants are primarily concerned not in teaching what the Church proclaims but what the Bible proclaims. The Reformers started here. Martin Luther once came to a teacher who shared with him his spiritual unrest. He said: "I've been reading the Bible and I cannot reconcile its teachings with the practices of the Church." And the teacher in that monastery at Erfurt said: "Brother Martin, let the Bible alone. Read the old teachers. They will give you the whole marrow of the Bible. Reading the Bible simply breeds unrest."

But in spite of the teacher's warning Luther read the Bible and the Revolution began in Germany. In Switzerland, Zwingli read the Bible and initiated the Reformation there. Calvin was led by his studies in the Greek Testament to doubt the orthodox opinions of his day. Then his doubts became more and more pronounced as he continued with his studies. He compared the Church as he knew it with the Christ of his Bible. He discovered that many of the Church's teachings, proclaimed as the very essence of orthodox Christianity, had little or no warrant in the pages of Scripture. For long he was a fugitive condemned as a heretic because he was setting the authority of Scripture above that of the Pope and the Church and expounding Bible teachings as opposed to those of the officially recognized theologians.

Today we believe likewise. If a practice is not sanctioned by Holy Writ, it cannot be sanctioned by the Church. "Prove your theology and your Church custom by Holy Writ," cries the Protestant. The Protestant Trust Society of England offers $5,000 reward to any Roman Catholic who shall produce a text of Scripture to prove any one of the following ten points:

"That prayer should be made to the Virgin Mary; that the wine at the Lord's table ought only to be taken by the priests; that Peter had no wife; that priests ought not to marry; that we ought to pray to or for the dead; that Peter was bishop of Rome; that the Virgin Mary can save us; that the Church of Rome is the oldest church;

and that the Pope is the vicar of Christ or the successor of Peter."

Again, rediscovery of the Bible led to the capture of great experience. When men read that Bible, something happened inside them. They became new creatures and they began to turn the world upside down.

Protestantism is not only a privilege but a responsibility. Why propogate and promote the Bible if we do not follow the judgments? Of what value is the Holy Word if we do not carry through its injunctions? What good is a Bible if left unread? Today, as we congratulate ourselves on the privilege of having a Bible as our sole authority, let us also thank our God that we have the responsibility to read it and follow its teachings. The Reformation started when men delved into Holy Writ and had a great experience. Has the Reformation started with you?

II

Protestantism believes, second, in the right of Private Judgment. The real friction between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic is not "shall we use the Bible" but "who is the true interpreter of it"? Catholics say the Church is the true interpreter of the Bible. The Protestants say that the individual has this privilege. Catholics deny the right of private judgment in religious matters while the Protestants affirm it. This has always been a basic difference between them.

This means that we Protestants not only have the right to interpret scripture but the sacred obligation to do so. How much easier to be a Roman Catholic and have someone else interpret it for you. But you, as a Protestant, can not be indolent. The right of private judgment in interpreting scripture is more than a right. It is a responsibility.

If we say that man has the right of private judgment in interpreting God's Holy Word, then we must admit that every man has the right of private judgment. If I grant myself the right of interpreting Scripture (rather than the Church) then I must admit that every man has that right. Do I? It is a great privilege to stand up and say "God has given me the right to interpret Scripture." It lifts me to a high and noble estate. It makes me a king in my own right. It compels me to stand on my spiritual tiptoes. It means we believe God speaks to us directly as we read His word. Are we Protestants ready to let God speak?

III

Protestants believe, third, in Justification by Faith. That is—man's salvation is God's free gift and cannot be purchased by any meritorious works either moral or spiritual. Man cannot earn God's favor by acquiring merit, either through his own acts or by having credited to his account the superfluous merit of the saints who have been regarded as having more than they needed for themselves. God has graciously provided a way by which the broken harmony between rebellious and sinful men and the righteous and loving God can be restored. Individual man accepts with his heart and soul the overture that God had made to him. Man's sinfulness has broken and distorted the harmonious relations that should exist between God and man. Faith sets him right. It means that when we turn to Christ in trust, he accepts us even though we are still unworthy. This is justification. Another word is reconciliation. Man is saved by his faith in God and Christ.

But here again the Protestant may err. He proclaims, "I am justified by my faith. I don't need good works. I need no pilgrimages. I need no approval by any priest or Church." At that point of pride he falls. Protestantism is not only a privilege; it is a responsibility. A do-nothing policy is insufficient. We are justified not alone by our works but by our faith. But have we a faith? Let us search our hearts. If any of you is without

a faith I beseech you to call on one of our three ministers and we will help you build a faith. What good is it to be a Protestant if we do not exercise its privileges. If we do not think through our religion we are not real Protestants; we are merely non-Roman Catholic. Build an affirmative faith.

Some of us are like the boy who came home with a black eye. Father asked. "How did it happen?" He answered, "Oh, I was over at Murphys and said something bad about the Pope." "But son, didn't you know that anyone with a name like Murphy would be a Catholic?" The boy answered, "Yes, but I didn't know that the Pope was a Catholic."

IV

The fourth principle of Protestantism clashes with the Roman Catholic sanctity of the priestly calling. Catholics divide people into two classes—priests and laity. Protestants put all believers on the same plane. Protestantism has no double standard. Why do some laymen expect a preacher to conduct himself better than they? The moral behaviors they expect of a minister they exempt in themselves. Why does a Church frequently permit laymen to smoke but not its clergy? Why do we set up one set of ethical principles for ministers and another for laymen? The priesthood of believers means that laymen ought to live as spiritually noble lives as preachers.

Protestantism believes that there is one standard for priest and layman. This is a revolutionary doctrine. It means that every person is a priest. Thus a Protestant needs no mediator before God because Protestantism teaches that every man is a priest. The way is open between you and God. The partitions and the barriers have been overthrown. You can discover for yourself the will of God for you.

The priesthood of believers is a privilege, but it is a responsibility. It means not that the priest has stepped down to man's level but that the man has stepped up to the priestly level. You are a priest. Be worthy of your high calling. Live without fear, hatred and bitterness with a living faith which you are ready to share with those in need.

V

We are Protestants because we believe in the holy vocation of every man. Protestants are called by God to useful work. We must choose a work for which we are suited and which the fortunes of life bring within our reach. But we do not designate any man's work as specifically religious. Roman Catholics taught that God called men only to become monks. The early Protestants, having a low opinion of monasteries and the monastic life, met that argument not by denying God made calls to some men to devote themselves to prayer and meditation but by asserting that he called far more to be carpenters and blacksmiths and farmers. Protestantism gave a sense of divinity to the common laborer which he never knew before. Before Protestantism the only divine callings were to work inside the monasteries. Everything outside was secular — including man's work. Protestantism labeled every honest calling divine. Every vocation is the handiwork of God.

Protestantism released into the daily secular life of men a holiness hitherto known only to the monastic life at its highest. Worldly activity no longer was a secular tumult apart from, and largely opposed to the life of the spirit, but an opportunity where men could best demonstrate the power of their faith. The new industrial spirit of the age is pictured in the title of its books: The Tradesman Calling, The Religious Weaver, Husbandry Spiritualized, Navigation Spiritualized.

VI

A student called her minister and asked: "What do I believe? This evening I was in a mixed crowd. I was

tongue-tied and humiliated. The Roman Catholic knew what she believed; the Jew knew what she believed; the Christian Scientist knew what she believed. I sat there as the illiterate fool."

Fellow Protestants, this incident is no isolated experience. Let us study our heritage that we may know what we believe.

If you ever find yourself in such an embarrassing situation, remember this one contrast between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In Catholicism the authority lies in the Church. In Protestantism the authority lies within the individual because pulsating through every tenet of Protestantism runs the dignity of every man before God. Catholicism puts a lower price upon man than does Protestantism. Catholicism believes that man is too weak to govern his spiritual affairs. It proclaims: "Hand over to us your religious life. We shall guide it for you. Christ gave us this authority." The Protestant believes such counsel insults human dignity. Christ never gave such keys of control to Peter and the Church. He never empowered the Church to usurp man's privilege of working out his own salvation. He never gave the Church any ready-to-wear authoritarianism. When Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you," he proclaimed the basic tenet of Protestantism.

Many people in our day willingly abdicate this supreme dignity (which is their God-given responsibility to think for themselves) and submit their minds and souls to the Catholic Church. The evil effects of this abdication of man's highest dignity may not be apparent in the individual case. But let our whole society become infected by this surrender of the souls and minds of men to the keeping of a self-constituted hierarchy, and the result—our American institutions conceived in liberty will be drastically changed.

Protestantism believes in you. It built its foundation around your human dignity. You accept the privilege of a God-given faith; accept the responsibility of living it.

KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

John H. Townsend, First Baptist Church, Redlands, California

Scripture: Exodus 19:1-6; Luke 10:25-28

One character who is an avowed Marxist in the Broadway play, "The Tenth Man," speaks this line: "Religion is so pallid these days, it's hardly worth being an atheist."

In effect he is saying that much that passes for religion in our time is unchallenging and inconsequential. Many students of this generation are quick to pass the same judgment. Laymen and ministers, if they are honest, would probably agree that much of our religious testimony is ineffectual. To acknowledge these things is to admit that we stand in need of constant renewal and revitalization.

"The renewal of Christendom," to quote the favorite idea of a professor-friend, "will result from an intensive re-examination of church history." The man who holds this conviction, incidentally, is a professor of church history. "The renewal of Christendom," to quote many minister-friends, "will result from a return to Bible study and prayer." "The renewal of Christendom," to quote from the poet, "will be when Christians rise and act their creed, when their prayer is in their deed." Surely all of these ingredients, and more besides, would strengthen the position of Christianity in today's world. Likewise helpful would be a deepened understanding of some of the central beliefs which

we say we hold. Let us examine one of the central articles of our faith, in the hope that such examination will strengthen us in this place to bear a more effective witness.

One of Protestantism's greatest contributions was to recover the Biblical idea of the universal priesthood of all believers. In discussing the things Protestants believe, this usually is near the top of the list. In looking for ways to make our religion count, an understanding of this doctrine is of first importance.

I

What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, "priesthood of all believers"? Your answer is probably the correct one. We mean, in the first place, that as Protestant Christians we have direct access to God without the need for any minister or saint or priest, other than Christ Himself. We can approach the Throne of Grace in prayer, as individual believers. Distinctions between clergy and laity are nonexistent in the life of the spirit. Your minister is among you as one who serves, not as one who makes the bridge between you and God. If any man can be said to be a priest, then all can be said to be priests. The record preserved in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus describing God's call to his people, the children of Israel, would have it so: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). Protestants have conceived of themselves as that kingdom of priests. Here we part company with our Roman Catholic brethren.

Austin Phelps, an American clergyman and author, has described one of the doorways in the vestibule at St. Peters at Rome. This door is sealed and marked with a cross. It is opened but four times in a century. On Christmas eve, once in twenty-five years, the Pope approaches it in princely state, with the retinue of cardinals in attendance, and begins the demolition of the seal, by striking it three times with a silver hammer. When the door is opened, a passageway is revealed through which the multitude of worshipers moves into the nave of the cathedral and up to the altar. This is an avenue which the majority of them never entered before, and will never enter thus again. Dr. Phelps comments, "Imagine that the throne of Grace were like the Porta Sancta, inaccessible save once in a quarter of a century."

Thanks be to God, such is not the case! Thanks be to God that we can come to Him in the solemn hour of worship, in the still watches of the night, in the busy activity of the day. God is accessible. Protestants have stood by this conviction. The priesthood of all believers, then, is a central conviction for Protestant Christians, and certainly for us as Baptists. New vitality for our witness can well begin by a deepened appreciation of what it means to be a kingdom of priests.

II

But all has not been said. There is another side to the definition of the priesthood of believers. We are indebted to Martin Luther for his clear pronouncements on the matter. In fact, Luther stressed this second aspect of priesthood far more than the things about which we have just spoken. If every man is a priest before God, on the one hand, he is also, on the other hand, a priest to his neighbor. Luther was inspired by the text which we heard earlier. A lawyer asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life; he asked, in other words, what was of basic importance. Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

Here, said Martin Luther, is a doctrine of the neighbor. Each man is to be a priest to his neighbor, to his fellow-man. How did he reach this conclusion? In part it was by asking a question: in the Old Testament sense, what were the functions of the

priest? One function, of course, as a priestly class arose, was mediation. The priest represented God to the people, and the people to God. (This is precisely what we deny by our interpretation of universal priesthood, but such was the Old Testament outlook.) Another function was sacrifice. The first-born of the flock, or the first fruits of the harvest, were sacrificed to God. By the New Testament era there had been growth and change in these religious ideas. But Luther saw meaning, even in their primitive conception, for these priestly functions. He gave them, as it were, a Christian implication. Thus the Christian is one who mediates or represents Christ to his neighbor. Hear these words of Luther: "We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, and in his neighbor through love . . . I am to give myself as Christ to the man next to me . . . every Christian (is) a Christ to the other man." In this way, for Luther, the priestly function of mediation or representation of Christ to man was realized.

The same was true of sacrifice. Luther knew, of course, that God does not need sacrifices, but—he admonished—your neighbor does. Your neighbor is appointed by God to receive sacrifices of love and service which God does not need. The sacrifices required of the Christian priest are those of love and service to his fellow man. The doctrine of the priesthood of believers was incomplete for Luther without this definition. The Christian life is likewise incomplete without this kind of relationship, a man with his neighbors.

Albert Camus, in his stage play, **Caligula**, illustrates what it means for a man to sever relationships with his fellows. He illustrates dramatically the alternative to Christian priesthood, when that priesthood is conceived in terms of the sacrifices of love and service one makes for his fellow man.

Caligula was the tyrannical Roman emperor in power from 37 to 41 A.D. His chief attribute was contempt, contempt for men, nature, and the gods. Out of this spirit grew plans for a systematic program of terror and murder. Eventually, with all other objects destroyed, Caligula's destructiveness turned upon himself. In the play, Caligula plots his own end and dies at the hands of assassins. At the conclusion, knowing he is about to be murdered, the emperor delivers a long soliloquy to a full length mirror, ending it by taking a mallet and smashing his own image, just as his assassins fall upon him. For Camus, the author, breaking the mirror-image symbolized the ultimate extension of Caligula's scorn. One reviewer writes that this says without words that if a man cuts the ties that bind him to mankind, he will end with hatred for himself.

How imperative becomes the priesthood of all believers! The opposites of contempt and scorn are love and service. The opposite of hatred for oneself is in Jesus' admonition to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Maxwell Anderson has said it in these words, dramatizing Alan Paton's story of the plight of the Negro under white oppression:

> Each lives alone in a world apart
> Crossing the skies in a lonely arc
> 'Till love leaps out, like a leaping spark,
> Over thousands, thousands of miles.

A modern theologian writes, "To bear witness through love does not mean that we who are self-regarding men are to seek by desperate striving to prove how unselfish we are." Not a bit of it! Offering sacrifices of love and service on behalf of our neighbors is the appropriate function of the priests of God, and those we are.

Here, then, is our doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. It means on the one hand that every man is a

priest before God in prayer, and that on the other hand, every man is a priest to his neighbor in sacrifices of love and service. As Protestant Christians we hold in our possession one of the most significant ideas ever to enlighten the mind of man. To neglect its application is to seek the further impoverishment of mankind. To fulfill its meaning, the meaning of the priesthood of all believers, is to seek a better day. Come, then, let us be unto God a kingdom of priests.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

from page 2

Great Personalities of the Old Testament, which was published two years ago. The author, William Sanford LaSor, has focused on sixteen New Testament personalities and tells in a vivid manner that which the Bible, biblical scholarship, and a reverent imagination permits so as to make them living personalities in the story of redemption. Both books will serve well for sermon series and church school teaching. (Fleming H. Revell Co., 192 pp. each, $3 per volume)

Interpreting the Parables by Archibald M. Hunter is an aid for preaching and offers many expository and homiletic suggestions. Readers who are acquainted with the author's previous books will not need to be encouraged to secure this one, for once again in a competent and scholarly fashion the author deepens insights and offers sensitive understandings. (Westminster Press, 126 pp., $2.50)

The Inward Journey by Howard Thurman is a series of 113 meditations addressed to the deepest needs and aspirations of the human spirit. Many of them are prose poems which will increase in meaning through re-reading and thought. The author's carefull-wrought style, his probing of spiritual and human truths, his inspiring discernment to the seen and unseen worlds, and his devotional manner should make this a worthy addition to the classic literature of the church. (Harper & Brothers, 155 pp., $3)

Divorce, the Church, and Remarriage by James G. Emerson, Jr., is a sensible, meaningful, and helpful book on the problem of severed homes in the light of biblical teachings, church practice and disciplines, and human relationships. Here is the basis for a theological understanding of Christian marriage which will give substance to counselling by pastors and church leaders. (Westminster Press, 190 pp., $3.95)

BISHOP EVERETT W. PALMER
THEODORE P. FERRIS
JOHN W. MEISTER
CHARLES L. SEASHOLES
CHARLES F. JABOBS

LET'S TURN TO THE BIBLE

THE MOST EXCITING BOOK IN THE WORLD

Bishop Everett W. Palmer, The Methodist Church, Seattle, Washington

What would you say is the most exciting book in the world?

In answer we may reach back to memories of "Robinson Crusoe," "Treasure Island," "Huckleberry Finn," or "Two Years Before the Mast." We may recall lugging home from a rural mail box the newly arrived Sears and Roebuck catalog, hustling down a country road eager to embark for Shangri-La.

We may recall books of more modern vintage: history by Churchill, fiction by Huxley, poetry by Auden, theology by Niebuhr, or drama by Shaw.

But in terms of lasting interest and universality of appeal, honest dealing with man's nature and needs, depth of impact, and effect upon human destiny, what book compares with the Bible! All other books are to it as an ant hill to the Alps. In the most significant sense of the word, it is the most exciting book in the world.

Let us consider several reasons for such a claim and certain means by which the Bible can be more significant for us.

By what authority do we say the Bible is the most exciting book in the world?

I

It is exciting in historical significance. As no other book it embraces the human story. It reaches back beyond all written records to dimmest beginnings of human memory. It joins with myths and folk legends by which primitive man preserved and conveyed his history from generation to generation long before there was a written language. It reveals a panorama of cultural change ranging from the primitivism of stone age man and the first dawn of civilization to the sophistication of the Greco-Roman world at its prime. It spans the rise and fall of nations, beginning and end of empires, birth and death of civilizations. Within its covers we touch the throbbing heart of all mankind, we find the excitement of the human venture as in no other book. In its reporting of the human story, the Bible is the most exciting book in the world.

II

The Bible is exciting not only in the history it records, but in the history of itself. Its material was written not by one author, but by scores of people: by kings and commoners; by men in palaces and in prison; by generals and by poets; by busy men of affairs and by quiet scholars; by priests and by prophets. No book has such an exciting array of authors.

It was written and compiled not during one generation, but over a span of more than 1,000 years. Generations came and went, vast changes took place, but all the while the Bible, like a coral island, was in the making. Gradually men of spiritual insight and ethical concern recorded their findings and convictions, none of them thinking they were writing what would later be considered Sacred Scripture. Gradually in the testing of experience people became convinced certain of these writings were divinely inspired. Thus section by section the Old Testament was compiled, and

later the New Testament. No book rises out of such an exciting mode of creation.

It was written not in one language, but in two, Greek and Hebrew. And since its formulation into the Bible as we now have it, it has been translated into more than 1,100 different languages. Today it is read by more people than all other books. It is the all-time best seller. To win such freedom for the Bible, our fathers in the Faith suffered banishment, imprisonment, and were burned at the stake. No book is so exciting in its widespread coverage of mankind.

The Bible we take into our hands today is the product of more sacrificial toil, more painstaking scholarship, and more martyrdom by more people over more centuries than any other book ever written. Just in the history of itself the Bible is the most exciting book in the world.

III

There is excitement not only of its history but of its literary beauty.

Other literature contains passages of great beauty, but none is so rich in such treasure as the Bible. For generations now the King James Version has been regarded as the supreme classic of the English tongue. For marching cadence, poetic grace, rich imagery, and chaste simplicity where is the match for such lines as:

Blessed is the man that walketh
not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
But his delight is in the law of the Lord;
And in his law doth he meditate day and night.
And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

Or

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars which thou hast ordained;
What is man that thou are mindful of him?

Or

The Lord is my light and my salvation,
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life,
Of whom then shall I be afraid?

Or

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength
They shall mount up with wings as eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

For the excitement of sheer loveliness, nothing can equal the Bible.

IV

In addition to its witness to history and to beauty there is the excitement of the Bible's influence. No book ever written has so influenced the thought, speech, customs, and moral standards of mankind. No book ever written has been so productive of social change, humanitarian reform, and struggle for freedom.

The Englishmen who forced King John in the year 1215 to sign the Magna Charta were men under influence of the Bible. The Colonial patriots who wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were men under the influence of the Bible. Thomas Jefferson, who drafted the Constitution, said of the Bible: "I have always said, and always will say, that the studious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, better husbands." Thomas Huxley once said to his students, "The Bible is the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed. The Bible is the most democratic book in the world." Gladstone is reported to have said: "I have known ninety-five great men of the world in my time, and eighty-seven of them were followers of the Bible." It was Theodore

Roosevelt who said: "To every man who would face life with a real desire to do his part, I appeal for a study of the Bible. No book of any kind ever written has so affected the whole life of a people."

For the excitement of far-ranging influence, nothing can equal the Bible.

V

Surpassing its historical significance, beauty, and influence is the excitement of what the Bible can do within the person who reads it.

As no other book it helps us gain redemptive answers to the ultimate and uniquely human questions. It reveals what God is like and what man is meant to be. It tells of whence we come, why we are here, and whither we go.

As no other book, it helps us gain deliverance from captivity to trivia and from the waste of spending our lives in the service of secondary loyalties. It awakens desire to seek first the things most worthy the love and toil of human beings, even the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

As no other book, it helps us gain perspective that saves us from surrender to despair and slavery to cynicism. As John Bunyan's Pilgrim, beyond the Valley of Humiliation, we view the Delectable Mountains, the Hills of Hope.

As no other book, it helps us resist the worst of idolatry, which is the worship of self; the worst of evil, which is the sin of pride; and the worst of sickness, which is excessive self-concern. We learn the remedy which is found in the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself."

As no other book, it helps us find a Companion, even Jesus Christ, whose friendship frees us from bondage to evil, cleanses the inner man, empowers for righteousness, and lifts the heart into peace and joy.

By every worthy standard, the Bible is the Book of Books. In terms of historical significance, literary beauty, range of influence, and redemptive power, it is the most exciting book in the world.

VI

Is the Bible such a book for you?

Come farther, now, to see how it can be for you in the most redemptive sense of the word the most exciting book in the world.

Get a Bible that invites interest. Often publishers of the Bible seem to be in league with the devil. In the interest of economy they frequently print the Bible with such small type that even a saint would need to be bribed to read it. When buying a Bible for yourself or someone else, spend a few dollars extra and get one with printing designed to be read. If the old Elizabethan English of the King James version does not appeal to you, get any one of many excellent translations of the Bible in modern English, such as the new Standard Revised Version, or translations by Moffat, Goodspeed, Phillips, and others. If the traditional funereal black is depressing to you, get a Bible of brighter color. Get a Bible that invites interest.

Read the Bible sensibly. To understand the Bible we need to know its background. Before the Book of Jeremiah or the Epistle to the Romans, for instance, can make much sense, we need to be acquainted with its historical setting, its writer, the people to whom he wrote, and the reasons for which he wrote. That information can be found easily in a one-volume Bible commentary. Such a commentary can be bought for less than a year's subscription to a daily newspaper. Anyone with so much as an eighth grade education can make good use of it. Get a commentary that will help you understand the background of whatever book and writer you may be reading in the Bible. A Bible dictionary would be helpful, too.

Read the Bible honestly. Don't attempt to force the Bible into a purpose for which it was not written.

Don't expect the Bible to be up-to-date in science, or resort to mental gymnastics in an attempt to prove that it is. The writers of the Bible naturally reflected the science of their time. They believed, for instance, that the world was flat and that sickness was caused by demons. That does not repudiate their spiritual insight.

Don't assume writers of the Bible were speaking over the heads of people in their times just for our special benefit, providing us with a crystal ball. They were addressing themselves specifically to their contemporaries and so should be understood.

Use the Bible in honesty for the purpose it was written to serve. The Bible was designed for a higher role than serving as a text book in science or as a fortune teller's glass ball. It was created to serve the souls of men; to turn men from the ways of destruction; to lead men into resources which build them up in wisdom, goodness, love, and usefulness to their brothers. The supreme purpose of the Bible is to introduce people to God and establish them in the way of life revealed by Jesus Christ. Read the Bible honestly.

Read the Bible with imagination. The Bible is rich with poetic imagery, oriental symbolism, and allegory. When we read the Bible with a dull, prosaic mind, typical unfortunately of our twentieth century western world, often we miss the point. Sometimes, to interpret the Bible literally is to contradict its meaning altogether. For example, tucked away in the hills of Tennessee and Kentucky is a small group of people who take literally the verse in Mark which reads: "And they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them." For them the proof of Christianity is willingness to handle rattlesnakes and sip strichnine. Needless to say, they suffer quite a turnover in leadership. In reading the Bible, "the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life." Read the Bible as it was written, with imagination.

Read the Bible with a listening heart. Someone has described a devout Scottish minister by saying, "He never read the Scripture as if he had written it: he always read it as if listening for a Voice." God has many ways to speak to us, none better than the Bible. Through the ages, when people have read it with reverent minds they have heard God speaking to them, personally. So the Bible has come to be known as "God's Word." Hence, when reading the Bible, as someone has wisely suggested, where He condemns, bow in penitence; where He offers help, place your hope in that assurance. When He commands, obey. Where He guides, follow. Read the Bible with a listening heart. You will hear God speaking to you.

So the Bible can be for you the most exciting book in the world, even your salvation.

THE WORD OF GOD

Theodore P. Ferris, Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts

Today we are going to set aside, at least temporarily, our immediate problems and concerns and go back, way back, to a story in the Old Testament about two men, Samuel and Saul. Samuel was old and well-established. He was a little less than a prophet, and a great deal more than a fortune-teller. He was called a "seer," and he was called that because he was one of those men who could see more than other men saw. He had what we might call the gift of vision; things that were hidden from other

people he could see plainly and clearly.

It was natural, then, that when people were in trouble they turned to Samuel. Sometimes their trouble was relatively trivial; if they lost something, their money or their donkey, they went to Samuel and he could often tell them where to look for it. If they were puzzled about something, they turned to Samuel, and he could often tell them how to straighten themselves out. He was a kind of spiritual leader of the people, their father-in-God, so to speak, and he travelled about from shrine to shrine, settling the affairs of Israel as well as he could.

At this particular point in his life all the people were in great trouble. They had made their way out of the desert into Canaan, and they had done this at great cost and sacrifice. They had taken possession of what we would call, if we were in Italy, the hill towns, and their position, I suppose, seemed to them impregnable. They could defend themselves against all attack, they thought. But they overlooked and minimized the fierceness and warlikeness of the people who inhabited the maritime plain along the coast, the Philistines. They were well-organized and determined to drive out the people who lived in the hills to the east of them. The Israelites were no match for them, even in their mountain seats; they were a loosely-knit band of tribes; they had no unity; they had no king except Yahweh, their god. Their situation was desperate. They were losing every battle.

They went to Samuel and said, "We want a King." Samuel was reluctant. He knew the danger of power concentrated in the hands of one man. He hated to see a man take the place that God had always held as sovereign of the people, and very likely he was loath to surrender the place of leadership that he had had all his life to a younger, more politically-minded man. But the people persisted and, because Samuel was a man who could see things, he came to see their point. He could see that unless the people united, they were lost; and unless they had a king who could lead them, they could not unite. So he agreed that they needed a king, but who would the king be? Where was the man with the qualities of leadership that were needed? None was in sight.

One day a young man came up the path looking for Samuel. He was young, strong, tall; in a crowd he stood a head taller than anyone else. Samuel had never seen him before. He was Saul, the son of a man named Kish. He belonged to one of the smallest and most insignificant tribes in the whole of Israel, and he came from one of the humblest families in that tribe. And he was on a strange, rather amusing errand. Some of his father's asses had strayed away and his father had sent Saul and a servant out to look for them. They had looked everywhere, and looked in vain. Just about the time Saul had exhausted all the possibilities known to him and suggested that they might as well go home before his father began to think that he had lost them as well as his asses, the servant said to him: "We can't go home until we have done one more thing. There is a man who lives in Ramah, a man of God, who is a seer. If we go to see him, he will tell us where the asses are."

As Saul came up the path on this strange errand, Samuel, who had never before laid eyes on him, 'saw' his man. Here was the man with the gift of leadership, with the physical as well as the spiritual qualities that were needed to lead the people. Samuel listened politely as Saul told him what he wanted, then he said: "Forget about the asses. They have been lost for three days and by now they are found, but you come with me. You come up to the high place where we are about to hold a sacrifice and a feast. I want the people to see

you." So Saul went with him. He joined in the feast and then he stayed overnight. Early in the morning Samuel aroused him to send him on his way, "And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, 'Bid the servant pass on before us, but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.'" The servant passed on, and Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon his head: then he kissed him. Then he said, "The Lord has anointed you to be prince over his people Israel." So the young man who went out to look for his father's asses found a crown, and the fortunes of Israel began to improve. A nation was born.

I

There are three things that I should like to say about this story by way of comment and illumination. The first is that this is history. This is the record of things that were done by men in the past. As a matter of fact, it is one of the first pages from the recorded history of the Hebrew people and, as such, it is moving. Like most history, especially ancient history, it is a mixture of fact, folk-tale and legend, and it is not difficult to tell which is which, if you read it with any imagination at all. For instance, I think most of you would suspect, even though you had never read the story, just from hearing me tell it, that the story about a young man going out to look for his father's asses and finding a crown is a folk-tale, one of those tales that are bound to cluster around a man who becomes prominent. But the fact that the tribes of Israel were at the point of losing everything, that is history. The fact that at the time of crisis, a man appeared with the gift of leadership, a man who could weld the people into a unity, that is history. And the fact that the people recognized the qualities that Saul had, and that Samuel was the spearhead of that recognition, that is history.

Now the Bible is filled with history like that. The Bible is not all history. The first chapter of Genesis, the story of creation, isn't history— that is myth. To write history, you have to be there and record what happened; at least, someone has to observe what takes place before it can be written down. Nobody was present at the time of creation, so later men wrote a story that would tell what they believed and how they felt about the wonder of the created order and how it all came from God. The twenty-third Psalm is not history—it is lyric poetry, reaching the very heights of religious emotion and poetic beauty. Job isn't history—it is a meditation on the nature of God and the meaning of human life. The Revelation of St. John the Divine isn't history—it is a series of tracts for hard times. But this story that we are thinking about is history. So is the story of David and how he built the kingdom; so is the story of Solomon and the gradual disintegration of the kingdom. So is the story of the Crucifixion. This is history.

One key to the understanding of the Bible is to read it in such a way as to distinguish what is history and what is not. You can often do it by yourself if you use your intelligence and, if you can't, there are plenty of books to help you. If you don't, you are heading for confusion.

II

The second thing to say about this story is, This is literature. This is more than a bare congressional record of what happened. This is a record that moves you. If I had read the story in the King James version, there wouldn't have been any coughing in the church; you would have been moved, your attention would have been held because of the way the story is told; it is narrative of the barest, but most skillful kind.

All writing is not literature. Literature is writing that gives you pleasure over and above any pleasure that would come from the events described. The story of Samuel and Saul

is an interesting story, but you probably would not read it today for the story itself. We read it because of the way it is told, and somehow or other it lifts the level of our emotion and carries us up into realms that are higher than the realms we normally move in.

The Bible is full of literature like this. Just one example: the grief of one man for another is rather commonplace—we see it every day, and most of us feel it sometime during our lives. Simply to read the record of this would not be particularly moving or interesting to us, but when a man expresses his grief the way David did, something unusual happens. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. . . . How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

That does something to you, and you read it not only because you are fascinated by the story of David and Saul and Jonathan, but because it speaks to *something* in you that reaches out in grief toward someone that is lost in battle or in some other tragic accident of life, and lifts it up to places that are high and fine. No wonder, then, that in every school where the humanities are taught, there is a course in the Bible as literature.

III

The third thing to say about this story is that this is the word of God. I don't know whether you were impressed by the beauty of that line in the narrative that always stops me when I read it. Samuel, the elder, looking at Saul, the young about-to-be-king, realizing all the dangers that he was to face, said to him, "Bid the servant pass on before us, and stand thou still a while that I may show thee the word of God."

Think what that means—the word of God. We use the phrase so casually today, and rather glibly, that we hardly take in the tremendous meaning of it. To put it in its simplest form, it means that God speaks to us. It means that behind all this complex course of human events there is the mind of the Maker, and that from time to time the Maker speaks his mind to a man. This is all implied in that little phrase that we use so often—the word of God. God has the will to communicate his meaning and his mind to people like us. We are not left entirely to ourselves to figure the meaning of life's strange patterns. In this particular case, the message is now of no particular significance to us; the message was simply that he wanted Saul to be king. How he communicated that to Samuel, of course, is a mystery to us, just as it is when it happens to us now, when we know *beyond* the shadow of a doubt that God wants us to do some particular thing, and we are moved, as though by an irresistible force, to do it.

IV

These considerations point toward the climax of our thought about the Bible. The Bible is the word of God. God speaks to men in the Bible in a unique way, for he tells them more about himself there than he does in any other place. When you say that, you are not saying that God doesn't speak in any other place. God speaks to me and to a great many other people, for example, in Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale." But he doesn't speak to me in the "Ode to the Nightingale" in the same way that he speaks to me in John's Gospel because, in John's Gospel, he speaks to me about himself, and tries to tell me what he is like, that he so loved the world that he came into it as a son of man, that all who believe in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Some people make the mistake of thinking that the Bible is the dictated word of God, that is, that God himself dictated each word and that the words themselves are the words of

God. Therefore, if in Genesis the words say that God made the world in six days, he did, and if anybody says that the world was made in any other way, he is wrong because this is the Word of God. This has caused endless confusion in people's attempts to read the Bible and to profit by it.

Last Monday morning a man called me on the telephone, told me who he was (I had never heard his name) and said, "I listened to you last Sunday night on the radio." I said, "That's very nice." And he said, "You said in the course of your talk that the stories about Jesus' healing miracles are sometimes exaggerated. Did you say that?" I said, "Yes, I did." "Do you think so?" "Yes, I do," I said. "Does that mean," he asked, "that there may be other things in the Bible that are exaggerated?" "Yes," I said, "I think it does." "Well," he said, "I was brought up to believe that the Bible was the word of God." I said, "So was I." "And if it is the word of God, then," he went on, "every word in it is true." "I don't think we can go into this on the telephone," I said. "Do you belong to a church?" "No, I don't," he said. "I listen to all the preachers on the radio." "Your clue is to join a church," I said, "because the Bible is the literature selected and endorsed by the Christian community, and your church will help you interpret it."

I am quite sure that the confusion that was in his mind is not so naive as I am often likely to think, and there are people right in this congregation who have not yet worked out that problem. They have not yet come to see that the Bible, as we understand it, is the inspired word of God, not the dictated word of God. The words are the words of men through whom God reveals and expresses himself. He doesn't express himself equally in all the words, because all the writers are not equally inspired. For instance, in the 137th Psalm, the Bible says, "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against a stone." Do you think that is the word of God? I don't. I think that is the word of a man who hadn't yet come to see the glory of loving your enemies and blessing them that persecute you. God may be saying something to us in that line from Psalm 137, but you can't put those words side by side with the words of Jesus and say that they are both the word of God in the same sense.

In other words, it takes intelligence to read the Bible; it takes some degree of imagination and care to understand the word of God, just as it does to understand the word of any human being. It is not always easy to do; nothing great in life is easy. The question to ask when you read the Bible is, What is God saying to me on this page? Think of the story of Samuel and Saul; what is God trying to say to me in this ancient story, in which I would have little or no interest at all, except as an antiquarian, if I didn't believe that God was speaking to me in it?

This is what he says to me: above and beyond all your planning and your attempts to run your own life, there is a greater plan by a greater Planner. While you are looking for a king, he is preparing a king who will appear before you in due season. While you are trying to work out the problems of your life, he is working, sometimes in hidden ways, to bring his highest purposes to pass through you.

This is what he says to me. When a need appears, a man will appear to meet it. When you are in trouble, when you are up against it, there is something already being prepared to help you meet it. This is what he says to me. When you are at your wit's end, and you don't know which way to turn, and you think the Philistines will come up from the coastal plain and destroy your whole life, don't panic! Stand thou still a while until you hear the word of God. The word

will come, as it came then, to the person who listens carefully.

This is reading the Bible as the word of God. This is reading the Bible with the intention of knowing what God is saying to me now.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR BIBLE

John W. Meister, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture, he told him the good news of Jesus. Acts 8:35

H. G. Wells once said: "The Bible has been the Book that held together the fabric of western civilization. It has been the handbook of life to countless millions of men and women. The civilization we possess could not have come into existence and could not have been sustained without it."

An able lawyer could prepare an impressive case to substantiate the claim that our civilization is dependent upon the Bible. Take music: Handel, Bach, Hayden, Mendelssohn, and Wagner consciously derived their noblest works from the Bible. Take art: when we try to recall the most impressive paintings we have seen we instinctively include such works as Da Vinci's "Last Supper," Hunt's "Light of the World," Raphael's "Sistine Madonna," Ruben's "Christ on the Cross," or Dali's "The Crucifixion." Take literature: Shakespeare alone includes twelve hundred quotations from thirty-six books of the Bible. Modern writings abound with allusions to the Scriptures which are meaningless to the Biblically illiterates.

Or take history. J. Richard Green, the eminent historian, has written: "No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was read in churches, and it was read at home, and everywhere its words kindled a startling enthusiasm. The whole temper of the nation was changed. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class."

In light of such testimony, we can understand the statement of William Lyon Phelps: "I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college education is more valuable than a college course without the Bible."

We would think that a Book so basic to the way of life we consider precious and so easily available in all kinds of editions would be the most read book in our land. We would think that all persons who pretend to possess an education would have a working knowledge of the Bible. We would think that especially when our culture stands threatened by a non-Biblical bolshevism our people would manifest a veritable hunger to understand the Bible.

But this is not the way of it. A few years ago the University of Denver published the results of a campus poll which indicate that out of nine thousand students, six thousand never read the Bible.

One man tells of leading a discussion group on a campus when one of the young ladies indicated that she thought the epistles were the sisters of the apostles. This was bad enough. But when he related the incident on another campus a student said, "But whose sisters were they?"

We need not look to our college students, however, for examples of Biblical illiteracy. Our parish, I am sure, stands above average in its Bible reading, but we need only look at ourselves to recognize that the typical Christian today is not getting the most out of his Bible. Whittier once wrote:

(We) find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read.

But many children in our parish would have to say, "The Book our grandmothers—or our great grandmothers—read."

I want to make three suggestions which will help us to get the most out of our Bible.

I

First, remember the nature of the Bible.

We often speak of the Bible as though it were one book or, at best, two books: the old Testament and the New Testament. This is not the case. The Bible is a collection of books. As the Bible now stands it includes 66 books, written by many different persons, over a span of a least a thousand years, for many different purposes and in many different styles.

W. A. Smart has put the matter well: "Suppose that someone should bind together as one book a life of Augustine, some national pure food laws, some private correspondence, a hymn book, a history of the United States, Phillips' Brooks sermons, Poor Richard's Almanac, the criminal code of the State, a play of Shakespeare's, a prediction of the end of the world, and one of Emerson's essays. Bind these together as one book and tell people that they shall read it through, a page at a time, because it is the world's greatest masterpiece. The few who might try to read it in this way would soon become discouraged and if any should stoutly presevere to the end he would probably claim additional credit just because he had persisted in spite of his mental confusion. And yet there are parallels in the Bible for every type of literature in the chaotic list, and more besides."

We shall begin to get the most out of our Bible when we remember that it is more like a library than like a single book and when we read each part of it for what it is and claims to be.

II

A second suggestion is this: remember who is the chief actor.

The Bible is not a text book setting forth what some people think about God. It is not something that "came down" from God ready made. It is the account of real life experiences in which the cast of characters includes a man or a woman or a group of persons on the one hand, and God on the other.

When we read the Bible with this remembrance uppermost, we discover that the same God who participated in those experiences becomes an Actor in our experience of Bible reading. This is part of what we mean when we speak of the Bible as a book of power. God whose activity prompted these writings in the first place continues to act in the very recalling and re-living of the experiences. We find ourselves, or at least part of ourselves, in virtually every character of the Bible. And as God dealt with them, so he deals with us through their experiences.

Many of us are familiar with and grateful for the translation of the New Testament in modern speech by the Englishman, J. B. Phillips. He writes: "The present translator who has closely studied these letters for several years is struck by their surprising vitality. Without holding fundamentalist views on 'inspiration,' he is continually struck by the living quality of the material on which he is working. Again and again the writer felt rather like an electrician re-wiring an ancient house without being able to 'turn the mains off.'"

This sensation can be ours when we read our Bible prayerfully and with anticipation.

III

A third suggestion is this: remember to select with care the portions which you read.

Paul was certainly right when he said that every Scripture inspired by God is profitable. Most of us will get

the most out of our Bible, however, if we select for our reading portions which are most likely to carry meaning for us and which are still representative of the Bible.

One approach is to become familiar with what I choose to call "the core of the Bible." I have listed, for example, twenty New Testament passages which include a third of our Lord's parables, all of his allegories, his two chief sermons, some of the most stimulating chapters from Paul, and typical chapters from three other writers. If a person will read these twenty chapters twenty times, he will come to a fresh appreciation of the New Testament. These passages are:

Matthew 13; Luke 15; John 10, 15; Matthew 5, 6, 7; John 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; Romans 8, 12; Corinthians 13, 15; James 3, 4; I John 3; Hebrews 11.

Once this program is completed, a similar approach can be made to the Old Testament. By the time that is finished, one should be ready to explore some of the other Biblical territory, making notes in his Bible of those sentences and chapters to which he will want to return from time to time.

If we really want to make the most of our Bible reading, however, we must ever keep before us the final purpose: to place ourselves under the personality of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 8:25-35, we read of the Ethiopian eunuch who was so desirous of reaching a closer walk with God that he set out on pilgrimage to Jerusalem "to worship." During his return journey he fell to reading the Book of Isaiah. When Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading, the eunuch answered, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" When he pointed out to Philip the passage before him, "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news of Jesus."

This is the final purpose of all Bible reading: to begin with the Scripture and to hear the good news of Jesus. When we read it in such a way that the living God meets us anew in Christ, we will be making the most of our Bible.

THE BIBLE AND THE SPACE AGE

Charles L. Seasholes, First Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio

"Space is infinite. Man's knowledge of space is finite." So begins the report of the United States Senate Special Committee on Space and Astronautics. What then? It follows then, according to the report, that we cannot comprehend how vast are the dimensions of our ignorance! Moreover, the report says that it is at considerable peril when we attempt to construct an image of the future according to our past experience. "We have no frame of reference by which to visualize the design of tomorrow."

But we must do something as a nation to marshall our resources for this new space age. So then the report continues: "To proceed prudently or to proceed at all, we must of necessity proceed by faith. Humility is a proper traveling companion for this national journey."

Today is Universal Bible Sunday, universal meaning that it is observed widely if not universally throughout the world, for the Bible itself has extended around the world. But is there any relevance of this observance to the universe of the new space age? Do we have, in any sense, in the Bible a frame of reference for this day?

I

In the first place, this is not the first time that men have had to move out from one kind of universe into another in their thinking. A French historian of science has a book, "From the Closed World to the Infinite Uni-

verse." He is writing about the Middle Ages and then what happened in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century. The Middle Ages had had a universe that was compact and well ordered and knowable but the discoveries through the telescope by Galileo brought men into a knowledge of the universe in which the earth was not the center of its own world, but the sun was, and then there were other systems beyond that.

The great men of that era who were both scientists and philosophers had to consider the implications of all this for their day. Some of them were men of faith and had to take into particular account the relevance of church and Bible for it.

What had changed was just the science and not the ultimate reality of things, but some men of faith confused the issue by defending the science of the closed world of earlier centuries and thus did a disservice to faith. Some men of science later confused the issue by claiming for the new science sole and ultimate validity of knowledge. One of the men of faith, Kepler, spoke both for faith and the new science when he said, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee."

The psalmist puts it, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." Firmament literally is a solid substance and that was part of an earlier science outmoded. But the basic truth is that the heavens even of our expanded universe declare the glory of God stands.

We have seen recently three planets in the sky together and while planets are pretty small in the total universe and close to us, yet the wonder of the predictability and observability of this conjunction is something that it still significant. Moreover, it is not just the way we look at things subjectively; it is the way things are in the universe and there is a correspondence between our minds and the things that are. So the line of an earlier hymn of the earlier day, "Forever singing as they shine, 'the Hand that made us is divine,'" we can use now.

II

But there is something different about our coming into this space age of our century from when in earlier centuries men moved out in their thinking about the Universe. They moved out in their exploration by staying here and exploring by telescope and camera. But today men will explore the new universe by moving out into it, by going there.

What frame of reference have we for that? Is the Bible relevant for that? We must always remember that it is a man who will go out into space, and a man as a man will come back. The trip will inform him, it may impress him, but it will not transform him. The Episcopal devotional book, "Forward Day By Day," puts it this way: "Space ships can only carry sinners, no matter how fast they go. Escape velocity does not let a man escape from his sins."

This brings us right back to the Bible as a frame of reference and to the fundamental consideration of the nature of man. That every question is asked in the eighth Psalm, "What is man?" and it is asked in relation to the universe of that time, "When I consider the heavens, what is man that thou are mindful of him?" This question may be asked with a downbeat, emphasizing man's insignificance, or it may be asked with an upbeat of exclamation of the wonder of man, who has all things under his feet and is a little less than God. Perhaps both emphases are necessary for understanding man. Man is both "majestic and mean." He is capable of anything, we can say, but that expression may either mean that he has a capacity for any achievement or it may more often mean that there is nothing despicable he will not do.

The question may be neutral, "What is man?" raising the issue of what the

nature of man is. The Bible has an answer to that question and it has been summed up in phrases like these: "Man is created and thus limited in what he can know and do, his sin consists in his desire to be God. . . . He lives in history, meaning that men cannot always wait to see how things will turn out, they must make decisions; man is morally responsible to God and to his neighbor. . . . God has accepted him as he is that he may become what he should become in Jesus Christ." How relevant all of that is in this space age!

The Senate Report says, "We may, as some say, stand now at the edge of the battleground of Armageddon. Or, as others say, we may be poised before the plains of the millenium." That is Biblical language! Armageddon is the word for the final clash of the armies of evil and good, and millenium is a general term beyond the literal meaning for the longed-for world of God's reign and Christ's power and the dwelling of righteousness.

Whether this space age will be one or the other will be determined not by going out there but by what goes on here—how we use what is out there or made available to us in the space age. The devotional booklet again puts it this way: "Science fiction today indicates that man's deep hope for a better world may be satisfied a few light years away. This old earth seems hopelessly bogged down in wars and strife. Perhaps if we try again—out there?"

"But the Christian attitude is different. If a new earth is to be, God will make it. We may look, hope, and work toward such a new world, but it will come only when our wrong world is made over (just as the new man in Christ is a new creature)."

III

This leads us to what is just a single statement in the New Testament. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." But this is relevant and climactic for the whole Biblical message. A religious editorial speaks as of the Bible a veritable mirror of man: "The supreme and original textbook of depth psychology which reveals man to himself as he really is in his inmost essence." But the editorial goes on to say that the central message of the Bible is that God has acted in Christ so that men may be reconciled to God and to each other. The Bible not only penetrates to the root of man's deepest and most desperate need, but also points to the remedy, the way out of the dilemma. "In Christ he rediscovers his true manhood. If one thing is obvious, it is that, despite all the wonderful advances of knowledge and science, our contemporary world is in need of reintegration and reconciliation."

The editorial then tells about a man who had been an American airman in the war and had been on a mission of mass destruction, who was captured, confined in solitary confinement, beaten, and starved. But then a Bible came into his hands and the reading of it brought to him the experience of God reconciling him to himself, and through faith in Jesus Christ the hatred and bitterness of his heart were replaced with overflowing love, joy, and peace. He then went back to the Japanese whom he formerly hated, bearing with him for them the Bible's message of reconciliation through Christ.

It is then well asked, is there no relevance to the contemporary problems of our world in this? We would say that the Bible is our frame of reference in this day. It discloses to us God "immortal, invisible, only — wise." It is the mirror of man as he is in his actuality and in his possibilities. It brings us the assurance of the redemptive, reconciling love of God in Christ. God first reconciles men to Himself, and then as Christ is in them they may be reconciled one to another.

THE BIBLE: DOORWAY TO GOD

Charles F. Jacobs, First Congregational Church, Waterloo, Iowa

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith. Romans 1:16

Somewhere I have read the story of a woman who went one day to a bookstore to purchase a Bible. Upon being informed by the clerk that they were out of Bibles, she asked: "Can you recommend something just as good?" This fabricated story tells us much concerning our attitude toward the Bible and our knowledge of it. It is the most eulogized book in the world. We would probably all agree that it is easily one of the great books of all times. Emerson referred to it as "the most original book in the world, the alphabet of the nations." Preachers point to it as the chronicle of God's divine plan for the human race. It has been called the Good Book, the Word of God, the Holy Book, the Scriptures, and so on. There are probably few homes in Christendom in which one would not find a copy of some translation of the Bible. This book has inspired more fiction, more poetry, more drama, more songs, and more lives than any other book in the library of the world. It has the widest circulation of any book in the world. It has been translated into more languages and dialects than any other book. One writer says that "it is the most gadabout book since time began."

But we have a haunting suspicion that the most widely traveled book in the world may not be the most widely read book. More than twenty years have passed since Carl S. Patton wrote: "We revere the Bible, we defend it, we brag that it is still the best seller. But we do not read it." There are many reasons for believing that the situation has not changed materially in the last quarter century. Nor is ignorance of the Bible confined to the non-churched alone; it is almost equally true of children and adults who have grown up in the church. A professor in a college in the Bible belt was shocked to discover that his students were woefully ignorant about the Bible. Although these students had come from god-fearing homes and had been, for the most part, brought up in church and church school, they were confused and vague when it came to the Bible. When this instructor took the educational material of his denomination in use in the local church, he learned that a student might have read all of this material yet remained basically ignorant of the Bible. He concluded that most of the material was argument and propaganda rather than education. Verses taken out of their context had been used to give support to panaceas for the ills that beset modern society.

However, we must not press too far this charge that the present generation is more ignorant of the Bible than former generations. Henry David Thoreau came to an appreciation of the New Testament late in life. He attributed his lack of interest in the Bible to the unimaginative way in which it was presented in the church school. But once having discovered the wealth of the Scriptures, he soared to crescendos of praise. Yet he said: "I know of no book that has so few readers. There is none so truly strange, and heretical, and unpopular."

I want to say three things, very simple things I have in mind, about the Scriptures: first, far from being a simple book, it is a complex collection of documents; second, we should be eternally grateful for the New Bible, made possible through the study of languages, history, sociology, anthropology and, above all, the spade of the archaeologist; third, the Bible is a book in which man's encounter with God is vividly portrayed.

I

To begin with, if you have been brought up on the old notion that the Bible is a simple book, so simple indeed that a child can read and understand it unaided, I would dissuade you. On the contrary the Bible is not a book at all but a collection of books written by more than forty authors, among which there were poets, historians, dramatists, philosophers, and song writers. These authors wrote over a period covering fifteen hundred years; they lived in widely separated places and varied markedly in ethical and moral standards. H. G. Wells, describes the Bible "as the most remarkable collection of ancient documents in existence."

The term Bible was first applied to this collection of Hebrew and Christian books in the fourth century. The name was taken from Byblos, a town in Phoenicia, from whence the papyrus bark was harvested and shipped to many parts of the ancient world. In the thirteenth century the term—The Bible—was applied to the entire collection, a usage which continues to this day.

There are many reasons why the Bible is a complex and difficult collection of books to read and to understand. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Later the books were to be translated out of these languages into the Latin, and thence into all the languages of the world. It was inevitable, as scholars translated the books from their ancient languages, that something of the original would be lost and many variations would appear in the several translations. Moreover, the Bible is an oriental book which creates a problem in understanding for the western mind. Each book in the Bible was written to meet the particular problems of the age and each writer reflected the anxieties, the political and social tensions, and the religious concerns of his own day. To understand the Bible one must be able to insinuate himself into the past and to identify himself with the age in which the books were written.

Moreover, there are many ethical problems which must be dealt with as you read the Bible. There was a time when, according to Genesis, God demanded human sacrifice. Hatred, prejudice, magic, and superstition are to be found in this great book, and apparently with the approval of men who presumably spoke for God. The Psalmist declared, "Happy shall be he who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" These were to be Babylonian children, of course. But Jesus said, "You shall love your enemies and pray for those who despitefully use you." The Bible teaches that "to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God" is your chief duty, but this same book condones slavery, prejudice, race hatred, and murder. Yes, the Bible, far from being a simple book, is a complex collection of sixty-six volumes.

II

Secondly, we ought to be eternally grateful for the New Bible which modern Biblical scholarship has produced. Before the disciplines of language, history, anthropology, sociology, and archaeology transformed the Bible into a living, human document, it was thought of as being a kind of rule book in which God had set forth his plan of salvation for mankind. It was pictured as a single, unified story, beginning with the account of creation and ending with Revelation. The men who gave their names to the various documents were automatons, mechanical secretaries, to whom God had dictated his inspired and infallible word. It was referred to as "God's Divine Plan of Salvation." This was God's book. Men turned to this book to see what God had said to men in the long past. The orthodox hold that every word, every phrase in the Bible is of equal value; that it must be accepted as such from "kiver to kiver." To question any part of the

Bible was forbidden with the threat from the closing passages of Revelation: "If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in the book."

Now I have great respect for the support which the Bible has given to men and women in the struggle that is life. I am not unmindful that the old Bible brought comfort to the weary, strengthened the hand of the weak, and inspired great character. But out of this old view of the Scriptures came the innumerable sects of Protestantism, each claiming to present the last truth about God's word. Moreover, I think that it can be cogently argued that this narrow view if the Bible has often made it difficult to practice Christianity and has actually fostered hate and divisiveness.

I count it one of the great gains of our time that we need no longer accept the Bible with such limited views. A century ago, out of the universities of Germany, came the beginning of modern Biblical scholarship. It was not easy. Everywhere the cry went up from the faithful, "They are destroying the Bible." The term "higher criticism" and "textual criticism" became synonymous with the evil one. Out of this great controversy came the Bible of modern scholarship. Textual criticism discovered the successive strata of literature in the Bible; it showed us that there was not one account of the creation but two, and that these stories had been written by men in widely different periods of time and with markedly different views. But textual criticism had support from the socio-historian who, delving into the records of the past, recreated the social environment out of which the books of the Bible had come. The linguist, the historian, the sociologist, all had the incalculable contribution of the archaeologist. Digging among the ruins of the ancient world, at the origins of our way of life, these men unearthed priceless information concerning the Jews and the ancient world in which they lived. You who have read Dr. Breasted's "Dawn of Conscience" know that while the Jews were a devout people, they were not the first monotheists of history, nor were they a peculiarly religious people. Recent excavations in Palestine have shown that great cultures flourished in that part of the world centuries before the Israelites invaded the land.

We may be grateful that the Bible is not a simple rule book, or even a book of science, for if this had been the case the Bible would have perished long ago. The Bible, interpreted by modern scholarship, is a human book. We say that it is God's book, but there is no denying that it has the marks of human hands upon it. It is the record of men and women wrestling with very real questions, interrogating God, and waiting, as Walt Whitman suggests, until they could hear the answer. The authors of the books of the Bible were not automatons but real men struggling with vital problems. Under the light of scholarship the Bible is a portrayal of man's encounter with God. Revelation is no longer thought of as coming down from heaven alone, but also rising up out of the hearts of aspiring men. The Bible, interpreted in the light of modern study, is all that is implied by the term—a book of life. It tells us about men who were often lonely and afraid. It is a record of men who could have said as A. E. Housman said:

> I, a stranger, and afraid,
> In a world I never made.

Through the gift of modern scholarship we may go to our Bible to discover what people believed about God and about their world, and how their ideas altered their living. Far from destroying the Bible, these Biblical scholars have transformed it into a vital, living record of man's meeting with God.

III

Finally, through the aid of modern Biblical scholarship we are able to see the developing nature of our religion. It sets forth in stories, in prophecies, in historical records the various ideas that men in the past had about their world, about religion and, above all, about God. In the first chapter of Genesis is an incredibly beautiful story of creation. This is how some ancient thinker believed that the world and all things in it came to be. No matter whether every item in it jibes with the present day scientific accounts of creation, the author of this story supplied the foundation of all idealistic philosophies: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

As I look back over the years to my own childhood I realize how wonderfully I was blessed with a good home and the influence of the church. But for all my appreciation of my religious heritage, I cannot be grateful for the manner in which the story of Abraham and Issac was taught to me. As a child I was terrorized by this old tale. In our home there was a Bible story book with many pictures and as long as I live I shall never forget the picture which portrayed Abraham standing with his arm in the air ready to plunge the knife into his son. To be sure, the murder never came off; God intervened just in time to save the life of the boy. But we were taught that this story was intended to teach obedience to God; Abraham, even if it meant the murder of his own son, was unwilling to be disobedient. What this story tells us about the ancient past is, however, important; it tells us that there was a time when God demanded human sacrifice. Perhaps this story represents a transition period in human thought about God. At last man had come to see that God did not demand human sacrifice but would henceforth be satisfied with animal sacrifice. The years edge into centuries and sacrifices of grain and libations of oil are made at many a shrine. Then one day out of the south, a rugged frontiersman whose work was with sycamore trees, crossed the boundaries of his own country and came to Bethel in the northern kingdom. The comfortable priestcraft, along with the privileged classes, were frightened and shocked by what this man said. As the smoke from the holy shrines rose heavenward, Amos declared:

> I hate, I despise your feasts,
> and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
> Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings.
> I will not accept them,
> and the peace offering of your fatted beasts
> I will not look upon . . .
> But let justice roll down like waters,
> and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

And out of that same century came the great organ voice of Micah, saying:

> With what shall I come before the Lord,
> and bow myself before God on high?
> Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
> with calves a year old?
> Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
> with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
> Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
> the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
> He has showed you, O man, what is good:
> and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

These great ethical prophets stand out like lofty mountain peaks tower-

ing over the valleys. Man has come a long way from that ancient time when he thought God was a capricious tyrant demanding the sacrifice of his first-born, to this hour when he thinks of God in terms of righteousness, justice, mercy, and compassion, being satisfied with nothing less than a contrite heart.

The years edge into centuries and hard times settle over the land of Judah. Her temple lies in ruin and her people, the best of them, exiles, bivouaced on the banks of the Chebar in Babylonia. After years of estrangement and loneliness they were permitted to return to their homeland, there to rebuild their temple and to renew their life. Noble as the dream and the effort was, out of it came prejudice and hatred which threatened to destroy the adventure. Intermarriage was forbidden and husbands who had foreign wives were encouraged to divorce them and if they had children to put them away. Out of the heartache, and from some great Jew, came the infinitely tender story of Ruth, declaring to all who would read that God loved the foreigner, too. The narrow exclusiveness of this period produced the book of Jonah, the greatest missionary tract ever written. Through this book the writer was saying to all who would read that God had the same concern, the same love and compassion, for all his people, whether Jew or Gentile.

Then in the fullness of time, on the fringe of the Roman Empire, God revealed himself in the birth of a tiny baby who, when he became a man, divided the centuries. This was to be the watershed of history. Men and women affirmed: "And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." Jesus taught that God is love and he made that principle concrete in his own life. He visualized this God for us in his memorable picture of the Good Father. No matter how far we may stray from his will and purpose, what valleys of sin and despair we walk through, our Heavenly Father is ready to welcome us home if we will but turn to him. He lived with such confidence, and attained such qualities of greatness, that many believed that the Word had become flesh and companioned with them. Susan Glasgow has said: "I believe that the greatest need of the modern world is not for a multitude of machines but for a new and a higher conception of God." The highest conception of God the world has ever known has been made known to us in Christ Jesus. He does not ask us to worship him; he only asks that we follow him into the heart of God. Yes, the Bible is the doorway to God. Each of us can say with Saint Paul: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."

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entire town; the 940 persons would share the other half. Three hundred and three persons in the town would be white; 697 would be non-white. The 60 Americans would have an average life expectancy of seventy years; that of the 940 would be under 40 years. The average Christian American family would be spending $850 a year for military defense, and less than $3.50 a year to share with other residents the knowledge of why they are Christians.

Henry Smith Leiper

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Our knowledge threatens to become more and more partial because it threatens to go out of date or be forgotten. Timeless knowledge is difficult to retain and timely knowledge difficult to keep on schedule.

Louis Wm. Norris